

REMARKS

We have carefully considered the Office Action dated November 19, 2003, in which claims 1-35 are rejected under section 112, claims 1-17 and 19-35 are rejected as anticipated by United States Patent 5,924,486 to Ehlers et al., and claims 15-18 and 30-33 are rejected as obvious over a combination of Ehlers and United States Patent 6,023,507 to Wookey. In response, we have amended the claims to overcome the 112 rejection and correct numbering errors. Further, we have amended the independent claims 1 and 19 to include a monitoring device for, and a method of operation of, monitoring diagnostic and/or statistical information produced by the electronic control systems of respective networked household appliances, as discussed in more detail below. In addition, we have canceled various claims.

The current system includes one or more networked appliances that include, respectively, electronic control systems that provide diagnostic and/or statistical information to the network. A monitoring device then selects, picks up, organizes and stores the diagnostic and/or statistical information that is provided to the network by the respective electronic control systems. The monitoring device further makes the organized diagnostic and/or statistical information explicit, that is, available locally or remotely within or outside the household environment. The system may also monitor and make explicit functional information provided to the network by the respective electronic control systems. The selecting, picking up and organizing of the diagnostic, statistical and/or functional information is based on the type of information that the monitoring device makes explicit.

The diagnostic information relates to how well various mechanical and electrical components of the appliance are functioning or operating. The diagnostic information produced for a particular household appliance is based on a set of diagnostic parameters

that correspond to the typical use of that appliance. Thus, the diagnostic parameters may differ between various types of appliances.

The statistical information relates to the operations and/or functions performed over time by the various components of the respective household appliances. The statistical information for a given appliance is thus associated with the wear status of the mechanical and electrical components of the appliance.

The functional information relates to the current operating modes of the respective appliances. The operating mode for a give appliance is expressed through the value of a set of parameters and may include, for example, the on/off status of various components of the appliance, the appliance control settings currently activated by a user, and so forth.

The current system is not hierarchical, and it monitors rather than controls the operations of the household appliances. In contrast, the Ehlers and Wookey system are both hierarchical systems, with the Ehlers system controlling a heating/cooling system and the Wookey system operating a master computer that controls certain operations of a number of slave computers, as discussed in more detail below.

The Ehlers system, which controls the operations of a heating/cooling system, operates in a hierarchical manner that is similar to the systems discussed in the Background section of the current application, beginning on page 2, line 1. The Ehlers system utilizes particular cost and/or temperature criteria provided to the system by the user and controls, for example, a heating system, to maintain the heating system operations within cost and/or temperature requirements established by the user.

As discussed in the Ehlers patent, the control system may function as a sophisticated thermostat that controls the heating system and the acquisition of fuel from outside sources, to maintain operations of the heating system within the user-specified cost and temperature ranges. See, e.g., Col.6, lines 55-58; Col. 11, lines 38 et seq. Alternatively, or in addition, the Ehlers system may utilize other information, such as, for example, total energy consumption and fuel pricing information in a model that predicts

future energy needs and costs, to determine how best to control the system operations in order to remain within the user-specified ranges. The Ehlers system may also acquire, from other sources outside of the heating system, data relating to the local environment, such as outdoor temperature and/or humidity information, weather forecasts, and so forth, for use in the predictive modeling and/or in controlling the current operations of the heating system. See, e.g., Col. 19, lines 14 et seq.; Col. 21, lines 12 et seq.

As discussed beginning at Col. 26, line 39, the Ehlers control system may produce various statistics relating to the overall operations and energy efficiency of the heating/cooling system, including information such as the current user-specified temperature ranges and cost ranges in effect, average daily cost of operations of the system over time, outside temperatures and/or weather over the same time period, and so forth. The Ehlers system does not, however, monitor and make explicit information relating to the operational status and/or wear status of various electrical and mechanical components of respective appliances, as is done by the current system.

The Ehlers system for controlling a heating/cooling system does not include the monitoring device of the current system, and thus, does not perform the functions of selecting, picking up, organizing, storing and making explicit diagnostic, statistical and/or functional information relating to electrical and mechanical components of the appliances as provided by the electronic control systems of various networked appliances.

Accordingly, the Ehlers system does not anticipate, teach or suggest the current invention of independent claims 1 and 19, as amended, and the claims that depend therefrom.

The Wookey system is a hierarchical computer system that includes a master computer and various slave computers. The system, under the control of the master computer, supplies to a remote center the logs of diagnostic programs that are run by the various computers. The Wookey system in combination with the Ehlers system adds to the Ehlers system the operations of running diagnostic programs on master and slave computers that operate within the control system to produce associated program logs and, under the control of the master computer, communicating the program logs to a remote

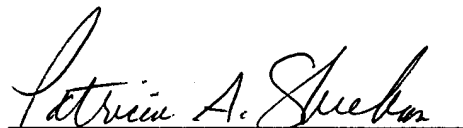
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center. The combination does not teach or suggest the current invention because, *inter alia*, the combination does not teach or suggest a system that includes a monitoring device for, or performs the operations of, selecting, picking up, organizing, storing and making explicit the diagnostic and/or statistical and/or functional information provided by the electronic control systems of networked appliances as set forth in independent claims 1 and 19, as amended, and the claims that depend therefrom.

In light of the above, we ask that the Examiner reconsider the rejections and issue a Notice of Allowance for the pending claims, as amended. Also, we point out that an Associate Power of Attorney was filed in March of 2001 (copy enclosed) and all correspondence should be directed to the undersigned.

Please charge any fee occasioned by this paper to our Deposit Account
No. 03-1237.

Respectfully submitted,



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